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ABSTRACT

This brochure offers students tips for successfully completing the freshman year at college, and is particularly aimed at helping the student reader to anticipate the situations and problems likely to arise during the first weeks and months at school. The suggestions are grouped by month and each monthly section also includes at least one reminder regarding things such as deadlines for course changes or aid application. The suggestions focus primarily on ensuring academic success and cover time management, study habits, managing final exams, becoming socially involved, and knowing when to go for assistance. Also included are comments on social life designed to show how to balance social and academic activities. Other suggestions to aid students in negotiating the administration of college life include registering early in order to secure the courses needed, and using assigned academic advisors to navigate the course selection process. (JB)

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An Insider's Guide to Surviving Freshman Year

Suffolk University
Beacon Hill,
Boston, Massachusetts

HE 028 207

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Marguerite J. Dennis
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Enrolling *in a college or university is just the first step in your academic career.* Graduating *from college is more important. For the past 20 years, national surveys have revealed that one out of every two college students will not graduate from the school in which they will enroll. This statistic indicates that something is terribly wrong with the college selection process. Either you, the educational consumer, are not asking the right questions, or colleges and universities, the educational providers, are not giving prospective applicants and their families the right information.*

The tips for surviving your first year of college are designed to help you, the college freshman, anticipate the situations and problems you are likely to have during your first weeks and months at school.

I hope you will agree that this information will be useful in helping you survive your freshman year.

Marguerite J. Dennis
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The information in this booklet was compiled by Dr. Kenneth Garni, Suffolk University Counseling Center, Boston, Massachusetts.

Tips for Success: September

Freshman year will not be as easy as high school. You will be responsible for the work you do, or don't do. It will be easy to fall behind in your classes if you don't budget your time carefully.

Don't take all tough courses your first semester. That will make it harder to adapt successfully.

Get in touch with your advisor as frequently as you need to.

➢ *Don't forget: deadline for course changes.*

Be prepared to read a lot and to study more than you did in high school.

Budget yourself carefully so that you have time for extracurricular activities.

Don't try to be too popular too fast and make friends right away. Don't force your social life. It will develop in time.

Don't think because you were a good student in high school that things will come easily in college. You have to keep up with your class assignments.

Pay close attention to deadlines.

Develop good time-management skills.

Get to know your teachers. Make sure they know who you are. Ask for their assistance when you need it.

Set aside time to study on a daily basis.

Tips for Success: October

Join a student organization. Attend social events.

Use your own judgment. Don't blindly follow the crowd. Learn to rely on and respect your own decisions.

Don't procrastinate. Do what needs to be done today.

Make sure you have a good advisor to assist you in effectively planning your schedule and selection of courses for next semester.

Preregister when the time comes. Do it early so that you have a good chance to enroll in the courses of your choice.

Try not to skip too many classes. It gets progressively harder to keep up. On the other hand, don't think that because you fell behind in the first month that it is impossible to catch up. It isn't *if* you use the resources available to you.

➢ *Don't forget: deadline for withdrawal from classes without penalty.*

Talk to other students who have been here longer than you have. Ask them how to study and how best to prepare for tests and exams.

Self-discipline is the key to academic success. There will be no one on your back to push you all the time.

➢ *Don't forget: deadline for filing for spring financial aid.*

Don't be afraid to introduce yourself to someone. It helps a lot in getting over feelings of loneliness.

Try to find uninterrupted study time, preferably in the library.

Tips for Success: November

Keep learning the system. Talk to students and faculty. Ask for their advice.

Make sure to use the help and tutorial services available.

➢ *Don't forget: advising, course selection and registration for spring semester.*

Don't get discouraged or depressed if you do poorly on your first tests or papers. Hang in there, keep working and things will gradually improve.

Plan ahead. See your advisor. Talk to students in your major. Use them as resources for effective selection of courses.

Make every effort to keep up with your work. Do the work when it is assigned. Try not to put it off.

Make sure you keep your family, work and school responsibilities from interfering with each other.

Don't overdo it. Limit yourself to what you feel you can effectively handle. Be conscious and careful about budgeting your time.

Be sure of your selection of a major. It is preferable to remain "undecided" if you are not sure what you want to study.

Talk to other students about how to select the best teachers. Get different opinions. Take the courses you need, but mix them with courses which sound interesting to you. Consult your academic advisor.

Be prepared to deal with all kinds of people. Make friends and enjoy your leisure time. Don't let others persuade you to do things against your better judgment.

Tips for Success: December

Don't procrastinate. Begin studying for your exams as soon as possible. Cramming is inefficient use of your time and effort.

Be sure to continue using the resources available to you. Get tutorial help in preparing for exams, if needed. Participate in stress reduction workshops, when available.

Cut back on your social activities as you prepare for final exams. You can make up for lost time over semester break.

Don't underestimate the amount of work you have to do to prepare for your exams. Budgeting your time is crucial at this juncture.

Try to use extensive study time in the library.

If you are unsure about how to study for exams, ask advisors, tutors and other students for assistance. Now is not the time to be alone with your doubts and confusion.

Plan carefully. Don't do things too quickly. Don't overstudy.

Study in a group, if you feel that would be helpful.

Don't stop living. You need a balanced perspective to work well on exams. In other words, eat regularly, sleep well and relax.

Don't be afraid to ask for help and advice. There are effective and ineffective ways of studying for exams or writing papers. Ask the experts (students and faculty).

Once your exams are over, be sure you have prepared for the spring semester. *Then* reward yourself for a job well done by enjoying your vacation, and come back expecting to succeed again the next semester.

Tips for Success: January

See your advisor if your GPA is below 2.0.

Start off spring semester smart. Recognize that your spring grades will likely look like your fall grades unless you make some changes.

Think about budgeting your time early in the semester. You need to balance your day: (1) study time, academic; (2) relaxation and sleep, taking it easy; and (3) social time.

If you need help, go for it now. There are significant benefits to getting a head start.

Take everything one step at a time. Don't spread yourself too thin.

Get involved with some campus activity or group. The involvement is more important than what kind of group you join.

Try to remain your own person. Don't conform. Do what you feel is best for you. Don't let others talk you into going out every night.

➢ *Don't forget to apply for fall make-up exams and course changes.*

Apply for financial aid early in the semester.

Be aware of your school's deadlines. Get to know the "system." Anticipate the drop/add period. Don't take more credits that you can realistically handle.

Keep in close touch with your advisor. Make sure you use him or her as a valued resource.

Continue to prepare conscientiously for your large classes. In them, you won't be able to rely on your instructors or classmates as easily as in your smaller classes.

Keep learning how to study. Get ahead early in the semester.

Tips for Success: February

Keep introducing yourself to fellow students. Those interactions will help you over the rough times which may discourage you.

Keep managing your time effectively. Self-discipline is the key to academic success.

Try not to get too upset when it appears you are getting the runaround. Keep looking for, and using, the information you get about how your school works.

➢ *Don't forget fall final exam make-ups!*

Know the requirements and career opportunities for your major *before* selecting it. Decide on a major, if possible. It will help you to focus better.

Don't get behind in your studies. Go to class. Keep up with your assignments.

Don't spend all your time studying. Keep reading campus bulletin boards and newspapers for announcements of activities which might be of interest to you.

Try to get actively involved in something. Don't sit back and wait for people to come to you.

If you have considered dropping out, don't feel you are the only one thinking that way. Many students have similar thoughts. Most stay in school. Talk with a friend, advisor or faculty member if the thoughts persist and are bothering you.

➢ *Don't forget to complete financial aid application!*

Most faculty members try hard to get to know as many students as possible. Don't be afraid to talk to them about academic concerns or problems of a personal nature.

Tips for Success: March

Don't skip classes. Keep up to date with your assignments. That way you won't have to scramble at the end of the semester to get ready for exams.

➢ *Don't forget: time to withdraw from courses without penalty.*

Use your spring break to get caught up, if you need to. If not, enjoy yourself. You have earned it.

Watch for the partying aspect that follows spring break. Don't get too caught up in it. Keep studying. Set aside time in the library.

Don't forget to keep a balanced perspective. Try to study, relax and socialize, in good proportions.

➢ *See your faculty advisor.*

If you want to take a specific course simply because it interests you, do it. But don't put off taking required or difficult courses for too long.

Start thinking ahead to the summer, to your coursework in the fall and to selecting an academic major.

➢ *Don't forget to preregister for fall courses.*

Now is the time to manage your time effectively. Too many competing interests can make studying more difficult than normal. Keep things in perspective.

If you need tutorial assistance, make sure you get it. Keep in touch with your advisor.

Be aware of the social/cultural opportunities on campus. Be actively involved in student groups/organizations.

Tips for Success: April and May

It is up to you to decide whether you want to go with the crowd or go it alone for the next month.

Sometimes, it's smart to drop a course and not get a bad grade. Sometimes, it's better to hang in there and try to finish the course. Get advice, and be realistic.

Don't assume your grades will get better. Do something different to improve them.

Start studying for finals early. The last two weeks are too late.

Don't fall behind in your classes now. Manage your time well.

Try to enjoy the end of the year. Find something to do that is relaxing.

Don't miss classes.

Keep working on and improving your study skills. There is a lot of planning and studying ahead in the next month.

Don't party too much. It is important that you be self-disciplined and focused.

It is very hard to break old habits. You have to work hard this month if you want to have different outcomes.

Congratulations! You made it through the first year.

For further information, please contact:

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